

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

UN Security Council Commends Morocco's Commitment to Human Rights, Urges Algeria-backed Polisario to Improve Refugee Rights

Morocco Vows Marrakech Bombing Will Not Derail Reform

Washington, DC (May 3)—Last week, the United Nations Security Council welcomed Morocco's establishment of the National Council on Human Rights (CNDH) to bolster human rights protection, particularly in the Western Sahara, as it agreed unanimously to extend the UN peace-keeping mission in the disputed territory. The Security Council also urged the Algerian-backed Polisario Front to respect the rights of Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps of southern Algeria, where they have been confined in deteriorating conditions for more than three decades.

In early March, His Majesty King Mohammed VI announced the creation of the CNDH as an independent body with the authority to initiate judicial inquiries into human rights violations. It is made up of public officials, NGO leaders, political party representatives, and civil activists, and replaces a predecessor body that performed a solely advisory role.

The Security Council welcomed "the establishment of a National Council on Human Rights in Morocco and the proposed component regarding Western Sahara," and also stressed "the importance of improving the human rights situation in Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps" run by the Polisario in Algeria. The UN encouraged the Polisario Front and Morocco "to work with the international community to develop and implement independent and credible measures to ensure full respect for human rights."

Amid allegations of egregious human rights violations in the Tindouf refugee camps in southern Algeria, the Security Council urged the Algerian-backed Polisario Front to cooperate with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to pursue "refugee registration in the Tindouf refugee camps." According to UN-High Commissioner for Human Rights Antonio Guterres, Algeria opposes the registration, refusing to accept that it is "simply a humanitarian measure."

The Security Council also called for "inauguration of family visits by land and the continuation of the existing programme by air." Expanding the current UN-sponsored family visit program to include land travel on a 'Road Home' would increase the number of refugees who could reunite with their families in Morocco. Some refugees have been separated from family members for more than thirty years and the current family-visit wait list stands at more than 17,000.

"His Majesty King Mohammed VI has yowed that the senseless, tragic bombing in Marrakech will not derail Morocco's commitment to accelerating democratic reform," said Robert M. Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "The international community should join the Security Council in supporting efforts to protect human rights in the region and ease the burden on Sahrawi refugees and their families. Registration in the Tindouf camps is an essential step to accurately count refugees in order to provide necessary humanitarian aid. It is troubling that Algeria and the Polisario continue to reject efforts to identify who exactly is in the camps, especially given recent reports by senior NATO officials that many of Gaddafi's mercenaries come from the Polisario."

** For full text of the United Nations Security Council Resolution, please visit:
[\[http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc16234.doc.htm\]](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc16234.doc.htm)

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The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. For more, please visit www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, April 26, 2011

Senior NATO Officials Report Qaddafi Recruits Mercenaries from Algeria-backed Polisario Front to Fight Rebels and Protesters in Libya

Morocco in talks to seek "political solution" to Libyan conflict within framework of UN resolution

Washington DC (April 26)—The London-based *Telegraph* newspaper is reporting that senior NATO officials have details of Moammar Qaddafi's deal to recruit 450 mercenaries—most of them from the Algeria-backed Polisario Front—to fight anti-government rebels and civilian protesters seeking to overthrow the Libyan dictator.

"Qaddafi is using all his contacts in the region to bring more mercenaries into Libya to defend his regime," a senior NATO officer told *The Telegraph*. NATO officials obtained the information from a defector, a former Qaddafi loyalist involved in negotiating the mercenary deal last month.

The *Telegraph* story, covered yesterday in the *Washington Post*, said Qaddafi has also hired mercenaries from Niger and Mali, and possibly from Chad, Congo, Sudan, and even Asia, and Eastern Europe. However, the story said that "a majority" of the 450 mercenaries, who have been hired for two months at \$10,000 each, are "members of the Polisario Front," which is based in southwest Algeria and for more than three decades has been in conflict with Morocco over the Western Sahara.

"The Polisario and Algeria continue to deny any ties with these mercenaries, but these are very serious charges, coming from ever more credible sources," said Robert M. Holley, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "NATO is responsible for carrying out the UN Security Council's order to protect Libya's civilians. It wouldn't make such accusations lightly. Clearly, hundreds of Polisario fighters can't go to Libya without the tacit, if not explicit support of the Polisario leadership, not to mention Algeria, through which the mercenaries must travel to help Qaddafi. If Algeria, the Polisario Front, and others are giving aid to Qaddafi's acts of terrorism against his own people, in direct contravention of a UN Security Council mandate, it calls into question whether the US should have dealings with them."

Algeria was one of only two countries (along with Syria) out of 22 to vote "no" last month when the Arab League approved an internationally sanctioned no-fly zone over Libya to protect the rebels and protesters.

Morocco was a key supporter of the Arab League vote and is providing humanitarian support to the Libyan people. Late last week Morocco began talking to representatives on both sides of the Libyan conflict to reach a "political solution" within the framework of the UN resolution.

* For a copy of *The Telegraph* article, go to:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8464254/Libya-Col-Gaddafi-has-spent-2.1m-on-mercenaries.html>

* For a copy of *The Washington Post* coverage, go to:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/post/will-obama-allow-gaddafis-mercenaries-to-act-with-impunity/2011/03/29/AFqTjAiE_blog.html#pagebreak

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cdark@moroccanamericancenter.com**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, April 19, 2011****Center for Policy****US Congressional Leaders Hail Morocco's "Constant Commitment to Human Rights Protection;" Reiterate US Support for Autonomy to End Western Sahara Conflict**

Washington, DC (April 19)—A bipartisan group of 18 US Congressional leaders led by Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS) hailed Morocco's continuing efforts and "constant commitment to human rights protections," calling on the US to address "human rights concerns in the Polisario camps" in southern Algeria. In a letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Members cited Morocco's "real human rights progress," including the creation of a new "wholly independent human rights institution."

The Members wrote, "As you know, King Mohammed VI has already launched an initiative that will greatly enhance the status of human rights protections in that country, particularly in the Western Sahara; it is a significant step that deserves our support." "We believe this initiative provides the basis for achieving real monitoring and respect for human rights [...]"

They noted that Morocco's bold initiative "will result in a truly unique and vital contribution to human rights protection in the region," particularly considering the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa. As the first Arab country to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address past abuses, Morocco has long been a leader in human rights protection in the region.

In their letter, the Congressional leaders also underscored the "longstanding American policy, supported by bipartisan majority in both the US House and US Senate" to peacefully resolve the three-decades old Western Sahara dispute by supporting a compromise solution based on autonomy for the territory under Moroccan sovereignty and "provid[ing] visible and concrete evidence of the US commitment to this solution." This echoes House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen's recent letter to Sec. Clinton calling for increased US support for a compromise autonomy solution, noting that resolving the Western Sahara conflict will "help create a more secure region and advance US national security interests."

Following her meeting with Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi-Fihri last month in Washington DC, Sec. Clinton reiterated that "[s]tarting with the Clinton Administration and continuing through the Bush Administration and up to the present in the Obama Administration, we have stated our belief that Morocco's autonomy plan is serious, realistic, and credible – a potential approach to satisfy the aspirations of the people in the Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity."

**** For full text of the letter and list of signers, please visit:**

[\[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/US_House_Ltr_Clinton_HR_041511.pdf\]](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/US_House_Ltr_Clinton_HR_041511.pdf)

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